







*[From the National Era.]*  
**Deacon Whitfield's Folks.**

BY FATTY LEE.

*[Continued.]*

The Deacon stopped short, sat down on the door-sill, and deliberately took off his shoes, from which he emptied a considerable quantity of hay-seed; he then replaced them, tied them tight, and, without looking at or answering Sally, who all the while stood drawing the hem of her apron through her fingers, he took his way to the field.

Perhaps he did not hear me, thought she. I will ask again. And the resolve required great courage; for she secretly felt that he did not hear her, and that a second reprimand might not be so silent.

When he returned in the evening, however, her heart misgave her, and all the evening she sat and cut apples in silence; but when the last basket-full was finished, she ventured to hint softly of what was topmost in her thoughts, by saying,

"We ought to work later to-night than usual."

"I don't see why," said the Deacon, after a long pause.

Sally felt that it was useless to say why, and so said—

"Oh! just because!"

"Sally Whitfield!" said the mother, thereby indicating a reproof for her freedom of speech.

The poor child felt reproved, and mortified, and baffled, and so went to bed, and cried herself to sleep.

But sleep is a wonderful restorative, especially to the young, and the following morning she felt fully determined to renew her application. The great day was come. At the latest possible moment she said—

"Father, are you not going to give me the money I asked you for?"

"What do you want of it, child?" he asked.

A little encouraged, she replied that she wanted to get a new neck-ribbon, to wear to Deacon White's.

"It's a pretty story," said the father. "If you are to be dressed up, and sent to dinner parties at five o'clock, and mother and me at home at work. You don't want a new ribbon any more than you want a new head. You had better wish you were a better girl than to be wishing for new ribbons."

The spirit of the girl was roused, and she said,

"You promised me a present long ago, for helping you winnow up the wheat."

"And haven't you had presents every day? Who gives you your dinners and suppers, and gets you new shoes and dresses?"

Sally felt these were not the presents she was promised for the hard day's labor she had spoken of, but she said nothing further.

All day she went about her work with heavy heart; but at dinner her father said, "Well, Sally, I have brought you that present to-day!" and a great shadow fell from her heart, and a vision of the party rose bright and distinct before her, but faded bitterly, as he went on to say, "It is no foolish gewgaw, but a nice sandstone, with which you may scour the churn and pails this afternoon, as bright as you please."

Feeling her bosom tremble with a storm of passion, the young girl left the table, and seating herself under a cherry-tree that grew by the kitchen door, she began picking the clover blossoms which clustered thick about her feet, until she had fifty, for she had counted them over and over again, for the want of anything else to do. While she was thus employed, her father, whose scythe hung in the bough over her head, came towards her, and seeing her clouded brow and her idleness, rebuked her severely, and concluded by saying—

"Now, go out of my sight, and don't let me see your face till you can behave better."

A little from the main road, and out of view of the house, was a beautiful grove of elms, and thither, more from habit than motive, for she often went there, she bent her steps.

Unconsciously she had taken with her the clover-buds; and seating herself beneath a low beech overrun with wild grape-vines, she began braiding her blossoms to a wreath. She was not beautiful, farther than deep dark eyes, a wealth of nut-brown, curly, youth, and health, might make any one beautiful. The wood was dreary and still—the heavy shadows stretched longer and longer over the thick, green grass—as the day went down, the spider wove his pale, slender net-work from bough to bough, entangling the golden sunlight—the birds quivered and deepened their songs, at first few and drowsy, till the woods shook with melody—the winds blew the curls about her cheeks, and played with the wreath in her lap, as they were. The time and place had had a softening and soothing effect, and, after locking her hands together, and humming over all the hymns she knew, leaning her head against the trunk of the tree, beneath which she sat, she had fallen asleep.

Neither the winds nor the birds disturbed her; but when at length a human voice, though very low and gentle, addressed her, the dream was broken, and the blushes beneath her dark locks burnt crimson, when, looking up, she saw before her the young village clergyman.

Gracefully and something gaily for his sacred profession, he apologized for the intrusion, saying he was not aware that the fair forest was presided over by a still fairer divinity; and that being on the way to meet for the first time the little flock over which he had been called to preside, he had been tempted by the exceeding beauty of the grove to turn aside, and hold communion with his own heart.

[To be continued.]

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